

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4429

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES

CINCLANT

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 1695

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI PINT AO

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MILITARY SITUATION

1. THE MPLA HAS SUFFERED CONTINUED MILITARY REVERSES DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS AND ITS CHANCES APPEAR DIMMED OF HOLDING ON TO LARGE CHUNKS OF TERRITORY UNTIL INDEPENDENCE. MPLA STILL SEEKS TO TAKE NOVA LISBOA FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, BUT IT IS SO HARD PRESSED ON ALL FRONTS THAT IT MAY HAVE TO PULL BACK TO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AROUND BENGUELA AND LOBITO. THE GENERAL MOBILIZATION CALLED FOR BY MPLA CONTINUES TO GROW IN INTENSITY IN LUANDA; THE CITY IS VIRTUALLY EMPTY OF WHITES; ALMOST ALL RESTAURANTS AND MANY STORES ARE CLOSED; WHITE NEIGHBORHOODS ARE ABANDONED AND STREETS ARE STRANGELY QUIET, EVEN DURING PEAK TRAFFIC HOURS.

2. ON OCTOBER 23, FNLA AND UNITA LAUNCHED ASSAULTS ALL AROUND THE BORDERS OF ANGOLA -- FROM CABINDA TO THE SOUTHWEST AFRICA
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BORDER. THE ATTACK FROM THE SOUTH HAS ACHIEVED SPECTACULAR

RESULTS AND THE MIXED FORCE OF FNLA/UNITA/ELP SECURED SA DA BANDEIRA THEN MOVED ON TO MOCAMEDES. PORTUGUESE TROOPS IN MOCAMEDES PULLED OUT OF THE TOWN ON OCTOBER 29, BUT HAD A CHANCE TO TALK WITH THE INVADERS. ACCORDING TO REPORTS I HAVE RECEIVED, THE ATTACKING FORCE CONSISTS OF BETWEEN 500 AND 600 MEN; ALL CADRES ARE WHITE AS ARE SOME OF THE TROOPS. THE WHITES ARE LARGELY FORMERLY PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS. SOME EX FLECHAS ARE TO BE FOUND IN THE FORCE. THE GROUP IS SUPPORTED BY TWENTY-SIX PANHARD ARMORED CARS. A DETACHMENT HAS GONE SOUTH TO PORTO ALEXANDRE TO MOP UP AND SECURE THAT TOWN, WHILE THE MAIN BODY SEEMS TO HAVE HEADED TOWARD BENGUELA ALONG THE COAST ROAD.

3. THE STRIKE FORCE, AS PEOPLE HERE ARE CALLING IT, IS SAID BY SOME SOURCES TO BE LED BY SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICERS AND TO BE COMPLETELY SELF-CONTAINED, WITH FUEL, TRUCKS, FOOD, SLEEPING BAGS AND ALL OTHER REQUIRED CAMPAIGN ITEMS. THE FORCE HAS AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE AREAS IN WHICH IT IS OPERATING, EVIDENCES GOOD DISCIPLINE AND HAS HAD TO DO LITTLE FIGHTING THESE SOURCES SAY. MPLA HAD ARMED HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS IN SA DA BANDIERA, BUT WHEN THE ARMORED CARS APPEARED THEY PANICKED AND THE MPLA CADRES WERE UNABLE TO STEM THE FLIGHT.

4. MPLA IS DOING WELL NORTH OF NOVA LISBOA, HAVING TAKEN CELA (SANTA COMBA) AND IS APPARENTLY MOVING ON THE KEY ROAD JUNCTION OF ALTO HAMA. MEANWHILE, NEAR MARIANO MACHADO (GANDA) MPLA CLAIMS TO HAVE RETAKEN ALTO CATUMBELA, THE SITE OF THE HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT THAT SUPPLIES NOVA LISBOA, IN NOVA LISBOA, DURING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 20, PORTUGUESE MILITARY OFFICERS SAW TWO HAWKER HUNTER FIGHTER BOMBERS, WHICH WERE PROBABLY PILOTED BY FORMER PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE OFFICERS. THE PORTUGUESE BELIEVE THAT UNITA PRESIDENT JOANS SAVIMBI ACCUSED THE MPLA ON OCTOBER 29 OF POSSESSING MIG 21'S PRECISELY BECAUSE UNITA/FNLA ALREADY HAVE MILITARY AIRCRAFT.

5. THE SITUATION NORTH AND EAST OF LUANDA IS GRAVE; FNLA HAS SIZEABLE FORCES AND LARGE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT IN THE CARMONA/NEGAGE AREA AND IS TRYING TO DRIVE SOUTHWARD TO LUCALA TO CUT THE HIGHWAY BETWEEN MALANJE AND SALAZAR (DALANTANDO). PORTUGUESE AUTHORITIES HAVE TOLD ME THEY LOOK FOR AN ATTACK ON LUANDA BEFORE NOVEMBER 11. THE SUSPECT THAT THE MPLA IS
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OVER-EXTENDED AND WILL NOT BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE ONSLAUGHT OF WHITE-LED AND FOREIGN-FINANCED FNLA AND UNITA FORCES AUGMENTED BY MERCENARIES. THEY ANTICIPATE A SLAUGHTER IN AND AROUND LUANDA AND INTOLERABLE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR AN INDETERMINATE PERIOD. ACCORDING TO THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY WITH WHOM I HAVE TALKED, THE ADVANTAGE IMMEDIATELY AFTER INDEPENDENCE WILL LIE WITH THE FNLA/UNITA, BUT THAT THE WAR WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME, PERHAPS YEARS. THE PORTUGUESE SEE

ABSOLUTELY NO HOPE FOR AN ACCOMMODATION AMONG THE THREE LIBER-
ATION MOVEMENTS.
KILLORAN

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